

The New Covenant in Christ's Blood
Galatians 3:15-22

Introduction: As Steve mentioned on Sunday, the book of Galatians is repetitive. It makes the same basic point that faith in Jesus is enough; you don't need to obey the Law for your relationship with God to be complete. Last week we saw in Galatians 3:6-14 that the blessings we have received in Christ were the very blessings promised to Abraham 4,500 years ago. We have been given spiritual blessings that people like David and Isaiah could only dream about – blessings such as the Holy Spirit Himself! Today's passage continues this line of reasoning. Specifically, Paul explains the relationship between the covenant given to Abraham and the Law (also known as the old covenant).

Opening Discussion: How have you sensed God working in your life through the Galatians series so far?

Read Galatians 3:15-22

1. By way of reminder, what were the Jewish legalists teaching the Galatians about the Law?
2. What does Paul teach about the Law in this passage?
3. What was the relationship of the Law to the covenant made with Abraham?
4. What does Paul teach about the Promise/covenant made with Abraham?
5. If the Law is obsolete, what value does it then have for us (see 2 Tim. 3:16, 17)?

Steve said:

This year for Lent (the weeks leading up to Easter) we have been doing a corporate confession on Sunday mornings. This confession allows us to express to God that we know we've sinned. I appreciate how this confession invites me to express to God the depths of my sin – which I'd rather not think about and rather not admit. It should humble us to the core to stand and say along with others, "We have willfully sinned against You – in thought, word, and deed, in which we've done and what we've left undone. . ." We've been "self-indulgent," inconsistent in our faith, we've not loved our neighbors as we should, etc. Basically we're saying, "Guilty as charged."

But we're not making this confession with a spirit of self-condemnation or defeat. We make this confession in light of the promise made to Abraham – the promise of life and the promise of the Holy Spirit. The sins we are confessing have been paid for by the blood of Jesus. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we can pursue faithfulness and obedience in deeper, more substantive ways.

Paul's point in verse 22 is that we realize that we are prisoners of sin ***so that we might believe in Jesus Christ and receive the life and fullness promised to Abraham.*** That's really what we remember at the Lord's Table. The bread represents Jesus' body which was broken for us. The cup represents that His blood brought about a new covenant – a new relationship with God. What the old covenant was helpless to do – impart life – Jesus did by dying on the cross. That's what we remember at the Lord's Table.

6. If our sins have been paid for by Jesus, why is it still important to confess our sins to God?
7. What has been your experience with the corporate confession (see next page) on Sunday mornings?

Lenten Confession 2011

Leader: Almighty God, our heavenly Father,

People: We have willfully sinned against You – in thought, word, and deed, in what we've done and what we've left undone.

Leader: For our self---indulgent appetites, and the way we use other people self--
-servingly,

People: We confess to You, Lord.

Leader: For our excessive, untamed love of worldly goods and comforts, and our inconsistency of faith in daily life and work,

People: We confess to You, Lord.

Leader: For lifting our hands in praise, but allowing our feet to still walk in the ways of evil,

People: We confess to You, Lord.

Leader: For rehearsing Your commandments, but refusing to see Your face in the needs of our neighbors,

People: We confess to You, Lord.

Leader: You made us to recognize eternity, but our momentary afflictions overwhelm our hearts and minds.

People: We confess to You, Lord.

Leader: We look to You now knowing that You can cleanse, renew, and make whole.

People: We pray, Lord, that You forgive our injustices of thought, word, and deed, of what we've done and what we've left undone.

Leader: Grant us the healing that comes from Your presence and the cleansing of Your all--powerful Word, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.